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The CANDY COTTAGE

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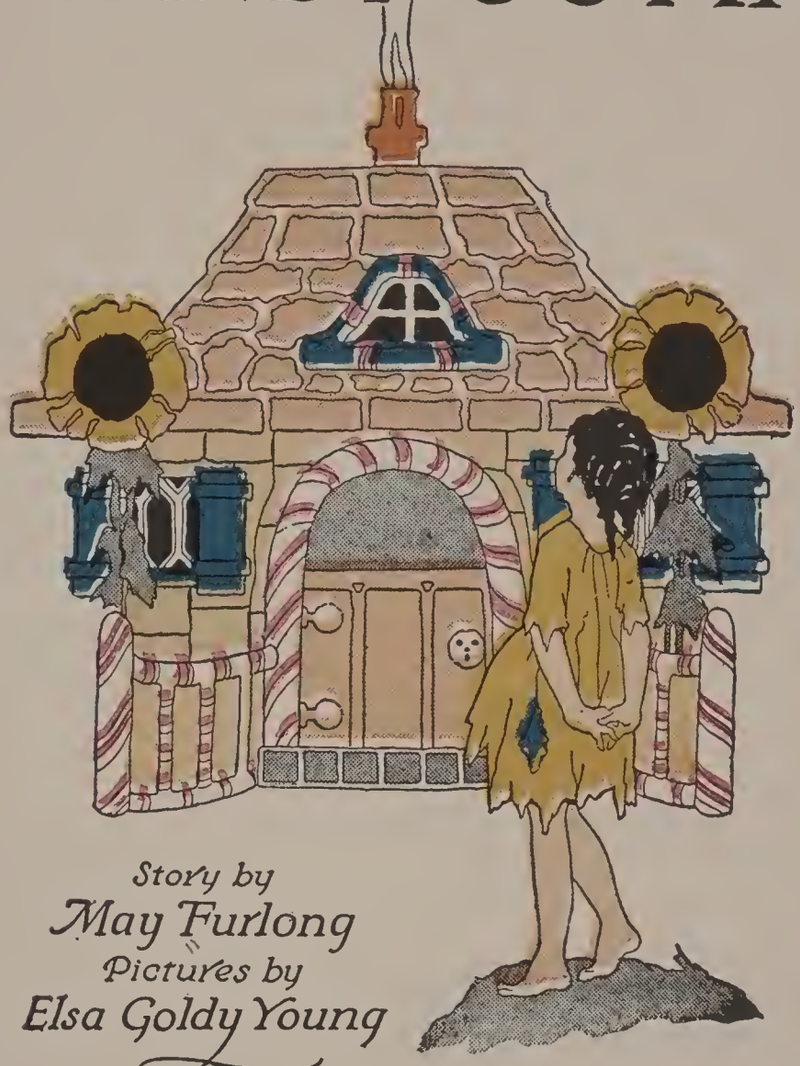

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The CANDY COTTAGE

Once there was a little girl named Jean and she was very poor. She had no father and mother and she was—Oh, so lonesome—because she did not have anybody to love her, or to play with her, or to take care of her.

Finally she was so poor that she had no house to live in, no bed to sleep in, and just one piece of cracker to eat, and only a torn little dress and pair of shoes to wear. She was very sad; so she started out in the world to find someone who would love her and make her happy.

It was a beautiful spring morning and overhead the birds were singing, "Tweet, tweet." Jean walked down a long, long road until she came to a little wood. After she had gone a little farther she heard a queer little noise. It was dark in the wood, and Jean could not be sure at first, but she looked up and saw a nest full of soft, downy little birds with wide-open mouths.

"I want my mother; I want my father; I want my breakfast," they sobbed and cried all at once.

Mother and Father Bird had been gone from the nest for a long time and their Baby Birds were very hungry. Jean broke off part of her cracker, but the Baby Birds were so hungry and cried so hard, she gave them all of it.

"Thank you, Jean," the Baby Birds chirped and sang as they gobbled up the last crumb.

"You are welcome," said Jean, and she was happy because the Baby Birds were not hungry any more and had stopped crying.

Jean passed on down the road until she came to a broken fence. There sat a strange little

girl crying bitterly and holding her foot.

"What is the matter?" Jean asked.

"I have no shoes, and I hurt my foot," said the little girl, and she began to weep again.

"Don't cry," said Jean. "You may have my shoes, although they are very worn."

"Thank you, but what will you do without your shoes?" said the little girl.

"Oh, I will be all right," said Jean. She thought the strange little girl with the hurt foot needed her shoes more than she did, so Jean took them off and gave them to her.

Jean walked on and on, up hill and down. After a while she came to a pretty cottage where children were singing and playing in the garden.

"Hello, Rags," called a little boy. "Aren't you afraid you will blow away?"

Jean did not answer, but ran on down the road. Now, she did not want to run away. She wanted to play with the children in the garden, but she was ashamed of her worn-out dress and her bare feet. She was really very sad and started to cry, when she heard the softest, sweetest little voice say:

"Jean, let me out!"

Jean looked down at her feet and saw nothing but the flowers in the grass. She looked before her and saw nothing but the big, strong oak trees. She looked overhead and saw only a bird fly by.

"Where are you?" she said softly. She did not want to frighten away the little voice.

"Here, here in this flower," said the same little voice.

Jean looked down and saw a pretty little fairy folded in the petals of a lily and trying to get free. Jean turned back the petals so that the fairy could stand up in the heart of the flower.

Jean did not think of her worn-out dress. She bent over so that she would not seem so tall.

"Where did you come from? What is your name? Why are you so small? Why are you here?" she asked in one breath.

"I came from my home high in the sky, be-

cause I heard you call," said the little fairy.

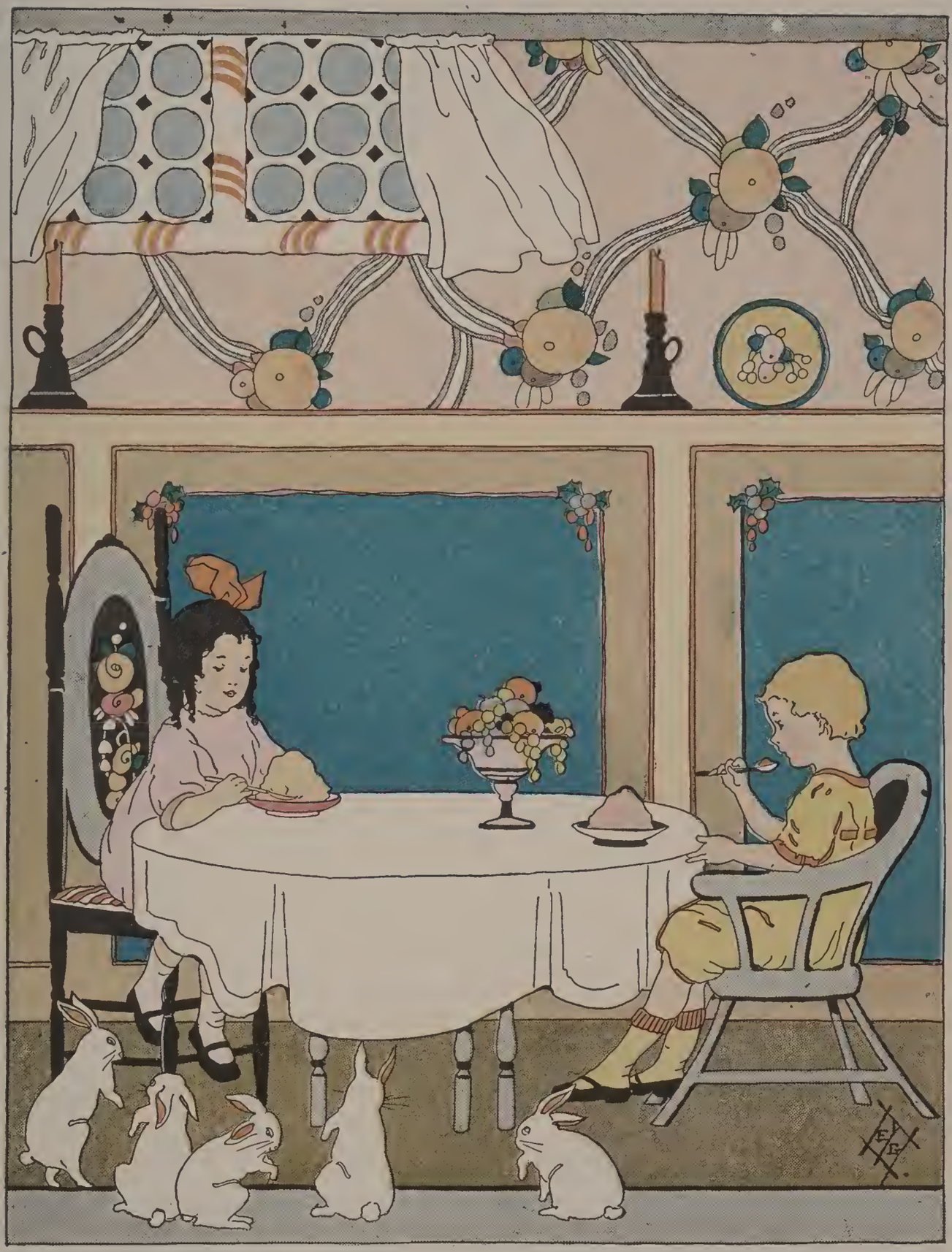
"I am so glad you came," said Jean. "I am afraid I might hurt you, you are so tiny."

Suddenly the fairy jumped up. Strange to say, she seemed to be going very high in the air for such a tiny creature. As she looked, Jean saw the fairy getting taller and taller until she had grown as tall as Jean.

"Didn't you wish for a little playmate? Well, here I am to play with you," said the fairy-child. She took Jean by the hand and the two little girls ran and danced all the way down the hill.

Soon the children came to a turn in the road. They followed a little path through a garden. Great yellow sunflowers, straight and strong as soldiers, stood guard over their little sisters, the red poppies at their feet, and everywhere the flowers nodded their heads and beckoned to the fairy-child and Jean.

At the end of the path was the strangest little house, not made of brick or stone or wood. It was made of candy, ice-cream, cakes, nuts, and fruit, and was called the Candy Cottage.



JEAN AND LITTLE PLAYMATE SAT DOWN AND HAD A PARTY

Jean had never seen so many good things in all her life. She was very hungry because she had given her cracker to the little birds in the nest that morning.

"Oh, if I could only have just one little bit of all that candy, Little Playmate," she whispered.

"Of course you may, Jean. More will come in its place," said Little Playmate.

As she spoke, Little Playmate broke off a piece of the Candy Cottage that was made of red and white stick candy. Immediately another piece of candy came in the place of the one taken away.

Jean and Little Playmate went into the Candy Cottage and everywhere they looked they saw chairs made of chocolate and tables made of caramels. Then, too, Jean noticed the door knobs were little round buns with raisins stuck in to make them look like a tiny face with eyes, nose and mouth.

"Take me, eat me, Jean," called tiny voices.

Jean was very much surprised to know that these tiny door knobs could speak, even in a tiny

voice, but she picked off one little bun and then another. She ate first the little raisin eyes and then the mouth and then the little head.

And always, new door knobs sprang into place just as when Jean broke off the red and white stick candy. You see, the Candy Cottage was a fairy cottage and all things were enchanted.

"Oh, is that ice cream?" asked Jean, pointing to pink dishes, filled with ice cream, nuts and candied fruits. "My, but I would like some."

"Have all you wish. See, the table is spread for a party."

Jean and Little Playmate sat down to the

table made of caramels and decorated with pink and yellow gumdrops, and had a party.

Now, this was strange ice cream. It looked soft enough to eat and yet it did not melt. Some of it was shaped like a dish to hold cakes and more ice cream.

So Jean and Little Playmate ate the nuts, and candied fruit, and cakes, and then they ate the dishes, too. Like the stick candy railing, and the door knobs made of buns, new ice cream and cakes came from the table, and there were as many dishes as when the children started.

All around the room there was beautiful paper with pictures of huge apples, oranges, plums, and bananas, and yet when Jean touched them they were round and soft like real fruit.

Jean gave a gentle pull and there were apples and grapes in her hand. Still, just as when she ate the stick candy, the dishes made of ice cream, and door knobs made of raisin buns, there was new fruit to fill in the picture.

"Jean, don't you want to come upstairs?" said Little Playmate.

For the first time Jean noticed a stairway of clearest crystal. It frightened Jean a little to look down through the glass stairs, but Little Playmate held her hand so she did not cry or hold back, but went up the stairs.

There was the biggest, sunniest playroom, and in it were toys, a merry-go-round, ladders to climb, and everything that children love.

Jean gave a little cry and ran to a corner where lived a family of dolls in the largest doll house you ever saw. It had furniture and rugs in it like a real house, and even food in the pantry. There was a Father Doll, a Mother Doll, a Big Brother and Sister Doll, and a dear little Baby Doll.

Jean sat down on the floor. She picked

up Baby Doll, who was a pretty little toy.

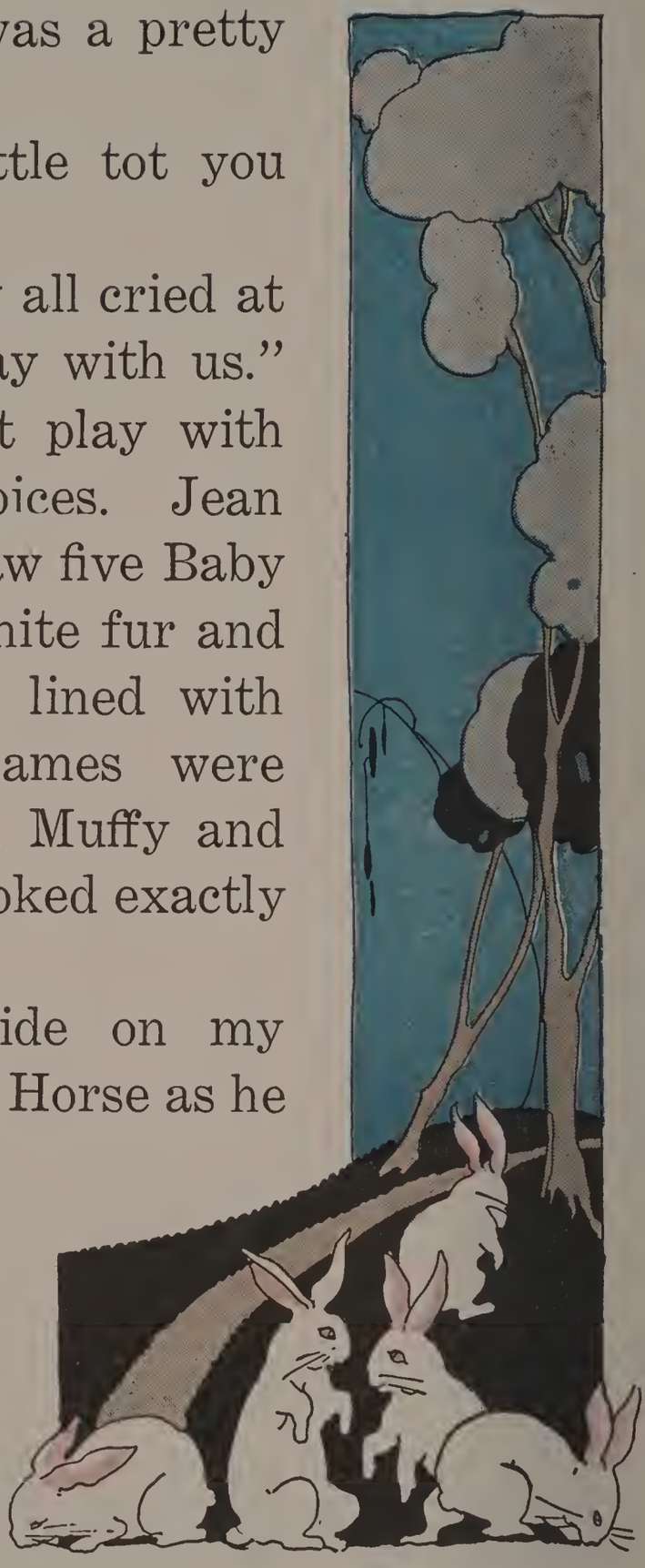
"What a sweet little tot you are," said Jean.

"Hello, Jean," they all cried at once. "Come and play with us."

"No, no, she must play with us," cried little voices. Jean looked around and saw five Baby Bunnies with soft, white fur and pink eyes, and ears lined with pink silk. Their names were Fluffy, Puffy, Stuffy, Muffy and Cuffy, and they all looked exactly alike.

"No, she must ride on my back," cried Rocking Horse as he galloped past.

All the toys laughed and talked like people, yet they looked like real playthings. Jean and Little Playmate played with Fa-



ther and Mother Doll, Brother and Sister Doll, Baby Doll, the five Baby Bunnies, Fluffy, Puffy, Stuffy, Muffy and Cuffy, and Rocking Horse. They played house, they played school, they rode on the merry-go-round, and the jolly horses shook their heads and snorted when they galloped. Everybody was happy and as good natured as could be, so they played all the afternoon.

Jean had been very sad and about to cry that morning because she did not have anyone to play with her, because she was hungry and her dress was old and torn. She had been having such a good time she forgot how badly she had felt that morning.

"Little Playmate, come here! See my pretty dress, my slippers and my hair ribbon," for suddenly Jean had noticed that her worn little dress was gone, and she had on a silk dress trimmed with ribbon bows, and shoes with shiny buckles. Around her neck hung a silver heart.

Little Playmate did not answer, nor could Jean find her in the playroom, although she

searched every corner, and all the Doll family helped her.

"Come, Fluffy, Puffy, Stuffy, Muffy, and Cuffy. Come, Rocking Horse, and help me find Little Playmate," said Jean.

She led the way down the glass stairs, and all the Doll family and toys followed. They looked all over the Candy Cottage. They looked through the garden, but they could not find Little Playmate.

Jean sat down and cried for her little playmate who had brought her so much happiness. All the Baby Bunnies and the rest of the toys crowded around Jean and tried to comfort her.

"Don't cry, we will love you, and you can always stay and play with us in the Candy Cottage," they said.

This made Jean happy again and she took all the little toys she could hold in her arms and hugged them.

The great round sun was fast sinking out of sight and the little birds had cuddled down in their nests for a long night's sleep.

"Come, let us have our tea," said Jean, and she led the way back to the Candy Cottage, with Baby Doll in her arms.

Great fireflies lighted the Candy Cottage while Jean, the Doll family, the five Baby Bunnies, and Rocking Horse sat around the table and had their tea.

"I want some candy," said Baby Doll.

"No, not at night," said Mother Doll.

When Jean and all her playmates had eaten all they wanted, Fluffy, one of the five Baby Bunnies, said:

"Come out in the garden, and when the moon is shining, Puffy, Stuffy, Muffy, Cuffy, and I will dance for you."

"I wish you would," said Jean.

Out in the soft spring night, the five Baby Bunnies made a May-pole from a slender birch tree in the garden. Catching some stray moonbeams they fastened them to the top. While crickets sang, the five Baby Bunnies danced around the May-pole, each one holding a pale moonbeam. As they danced they sang:

"Five Baby Bunnies, we
Dancing on the velvet lea;
In and out and round we go,
On the light and airy toe."

By this time, Baby Doll was asleep, so Mother and Father Doll led the way and the happy, tired toys and little girl were put to bed. In one corner of the playroom was a little white bed. Jean slipped in under the softest covers she had ever seen and was soon asleep, but not before she had said good-night to all the toys and kissed the Doll family. Baby Doll did not want to sleep in her own little crib, so she climbed in Jean's bed and Mother Doll did not say "No."

After all were asleep, the moon looked in at the window to see that all the toys were in their proper places. Who should slide in on a moonbeam but Little Playmate, but she was oh, so tiny again.

Softly she kissed Jean's cheek and made her smile in her dreams. Then, she ran up a moonbeam and back to her home in Fairyland.

Because she was always sweet and kind,

Jean stayed in the Candy Cottage forever and ever with Mother and Father Doll, Brother and Sister Doll and Baby Doll, the Five Baby Bunnies, Fluffy, Puffy, Stuffy, Muffy, and Cuffy, and Rocking Horse.

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